

# Putting Research to Work for Military Families



Focus:  
Multiple  
Branches

## After Deployment, Adaptive Parenting Tools: 1-Year Outcomes of an Evidence-Based Parenting Program for Military Families Following Deployment

Gewirtz, A. H., DeGarmo, D. S., & Zamir, O. (2017). After Deployment, Adaptive Parenting Tools: 1-year outcomes of an evidence-based parenting program for military families following deployment. *Prevention Science*. doi:10.1007/s11121-017-0839-4

**SUMMARY:** Parenting programs are important for military parents who experienced deployment and have school-age children, but little is known about the effectiveness of such programs. By randomly assigning 336 military families to the After Deployment Adaptive Parenting Tools (ADAPT) program or a control group, the study examined the effectiveness of the ADAPT program. Results indicated positive effects of the ADAPT program on parenting practice, which, in turn, was associated with positive child outcomes.

### KEY FINDINGS:

- Parents randomized to the ADAPT group showed improved parenting practice 12 months after the program.
- Improved parenting practice after the ADAPT training was associated with improvement in child outcomes.
- Parents who had different levels of parenting skills at baseline benefited equally from the ADAPT training.

### IMPLICATIONS FOR PROGRAMS:

Programs could:

- Promote the benefits of parenting programs for parenting practice and child outcomes across military branches
- Make existing parenting programs available and accessible to more military families
- Help military parents choose parenting resources that are suitable to military families' circumstances

### IMPLICATIONS FOR POLICIES:

Policies could:

- Encourage the development and continuation of parenting programs that support military parents and children
- Recommend training of professionals who work with military families on how to provide helpful resources to families with school-age children during the deployment cycle
- Encourage military professionals to collaborate with civilian professionals about ways to promote positive parenting practice in military families

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## METHODS

- Families were eligible for the study if at least one of the parents was deployed and had at least one child between four to 12 years old; the method of recruitment was not reported.
- Families were randomized to the ADAPT parenting program (n = 207) or a control group (n = 129). Each family was tested at baseline and at 12-month follow-up with a retention rate of 80% for the experimental group and 88% for the control group.
- Measures included observed parenting practices (i.e., problem-solving, harsh discipline, positive involvement, skill encouragement, and monitoring) and self-reported and adult-reported child outcomes (e.g., social skills).
- Data were analyzed to examine the effect of ADAPT on parenting practices and child outcomes.

## PARTICIPANTS

- Participants were 314 mothers, 294 fathers, and 336 children from 336 military families residing in a Midwestern state; the average age of the mothers was 35.67 years (SD = 6.54) and the average age of the fathers was 37.75 years (SD = 6.54); the average age of the children was not reported.
- The majority of participants were White (88% of fathers and 93% of mothers); the race/ethnicity of the rest of the parents and children was unknown.
- Most of the deployed parents were with the Army National Guard (59%), followed by the Air National Guard (11%), the Army (13%), Navy (7%), Air Force (3%), or Marine (1%) Reserves, and others (6%).

## LIMITATIONS

- The sample was primarily National Guard and Reserve families; therefore, the results of the study may not be applicable to military families affiliated with other military branches.
- The sample were solely recruited from one Midwestern state, so caution must be taken to generalize the findings to military families in other states.
- Thirty of the 207 families assigned to the ADAPT group did not attend the intervention; without excluding these families from the analysis, the results may not truly represent the effect of the intervention.

## AVENUES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research could:

- Recruit military families from a variety of military branches to increase the generalizability of the study
- Replicate the study in other states of the U.S. so that the results can be applied to a broad geographical area
- Conduct longitudinal studies to examine the long-term effect of the ADAPT program on parenting practices

## ASSESSING RESEARCH THAT WORKS



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